



American Water Works Association
Michigan Section

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May 23, 2018

The Honorable Lee Chatfield
PO Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: HB5723

Dear Representative Chatfield:

The Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association (MI-AWWA) is the nation's leading organization of water professionals and a strong advocate for reinvestment and rehabilitation of the country's aging water infrastructure. We are also advocates for making certain that investments in water infrastructure are made the right and most cost-effective way for the long run. The Michigan Section includes over 1,700 members. AWWA includes over 50,000 members.

Unfortunately, there is currently an effort in Michigan (HB5723) that is intended to take the selection of pipe out of the hands of utilities and their design engineers. We strongly oppose these efforts and the precedent such legislation would set regarding selection of other materials and equipment.

MI-AWWA believes it is critical that utilities and their design engineers be able to select the materials and equipment that they consider most appropriate for each particular project in their community. HB5723 would restrict the ability of Michigan utilities and engineers to exclude materials from the bidding process as they deem appropriate. Keeping the selection of materials in the hands of design engineers and local utilities is necessary if we are to have reliable and sustainable infrastructure.

Furthermore, HB5723 implies that all water pipe materials are equal as long as they meet the minimum industry standards in the definition of "acceptable piping material." This approach may be flawed and misleading because not all pipe materials are suitable for each application even though they may meet a manufacturing standard.

We are neutral about which materials utilities select for their projects. Our opposition to this legislation is based on the loss of local control in selecting best materials to serve their customers.

Respectfully,

Bonnifer J. Ballard
Executive Director

Good morning. My name is Bonnifer Ballard. I am the Executive Director of the Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association, or MI-AWWA. I am joined today by the immediate past chair of our Board of Trustees John Willemijn, who is a professional engineer in the water sector.

AWWA members include municipalities, water utilities, operators, engineers, manufacturers, suppliers, academics and others. We have approximately 1,700 members in Michigan. Our international affiliate AWWA has more than 50,000 members.

We are neutral about which materials utilities select for their projects, but we are strongly opposed to House Bill 5723. Our national affiliate AWWA has opposed similar measures in other states. MI-AWWA opposed a similar measure in the Michigan Senate last year.

For more than 100 years AWWA has developed standards of minimum requirements for materials, equipment and practices for water systems. These standards are used throughout the US and the world for ensuring quality infrastructure. AWWA standards are in place for many types of pipe, including iron, steel, concrete pressure, asbestos cement, and plastic.

HB5723 implies that all pipe materials are equal as long as they meet AWWA, ASTM, or NSF standards. However, the standards alone do not ensure that each type of pipe is suitable for every application. There are different standards for different pipe materials because pipe materials have significantly different characteristics, behaving differently under different conditions. Not every pipe material is suitable for every project.

Consideration of the standards alone are flawed and their citation in the bill may be misleading to the public. Inappropriate use of pipe in the best case may lead to reduced service life, and in the worst case can lead to serious risk to public health.

It appears that the intent of the bill is to open the bidding process to greater competition. However, the bill would eliminate the ability of utilities to standardize use of a particular piping system. Utilities have many reasons to standardize. An important one is efficiency. With continued pressure on budgets many utilities are having to do more with less, including less